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## Branded Titles

A **salvage vehicle** is a vehicle damaged by collision, flood, or other occurrence to the extent that the cost of repairing the vehicle for safe operation exceeds its fair market value; or a vehicle that has been declared a salvage vehicle by an insurer or other state or jurisdiction, but is not precluded from further registration and titling ( [41-1a-1001 UCA](#) ). A rebuilt/restored vehicle is a salvage vehicle that has been repaired and restored to operation.

**Note:** A vehicle that has been "salvaged" or "rebuilt/restored" will be issued a different kind of Utah title, referred to as a "branded" title. A salvage vehicle's Utah title will state: "Salvage." If the vehicle has been rebuilt, the title will say "rebuilt/restored."

Utah law allows, under limited circumstances, some salvage vehicles to be rebuilt and to have the "brand" removed from the title. But in most cases, a rebuilt/restored salvage vehicle will have a branded title.

However, other states have less stringent laws. Rebuilders will ship wrecked cars to these states, and rebuild them—sometimes well, oftentimes not—because these states do not regulate the quality of these repairs. The vehicles are then re-titled without the "brand," and then are sold to unsuspecting dealers or individuals.

Utah will not issue an unbranded title to a vehicle that has been branded in another state—even if the out-of-state title given to the buyer does not have a brand on it. So sometimes a purchaser will receive a clean out-of-state title, only to have Utah then brand it. A salvage vehicle with a branded title is worth thousands of dollars less than a vehicle with an unbranded title.

## Buyer Beware

The best advice is to spot a one-time wreck before you buy it. These vehicles can look good but there are some telltale signs:

- Be suspicious of any vehicle that has a recently issued out-of-state title.
- Be suspicious of a private seller whose name does not appear on the title.
- Use an on-line commercial title-search company to research the history of the vehicle.
- **Check the door gaps.** Make sure that the door itself isn't touching the fender when you open the door.
- **Check both sides.** It is unusual that both sides will be exactly the same when a vehicle has been damaged.
- **Examine the paint.** Check the doorjamb, moldings, and plastic cover items. Because any time a vehicle has been sprayed over these areas may be missed.
- **Check the dashboard,** which may not have been repaired due to the cost, right up to the molding, which may have chips in it.
- **Check the roof and doors for body filler.** The finish of the body filler may not be super smooth and this is an indication that there's a problem. It is harder to see dents when the paint on the vehicle is light so feel it with your hands. Sometimes minor dents aren't repaired at all.
- **Check that the rear tailgate and body match.** Gaps in some areas and a tighter fit in another is an indication there has been improper fitting of the body panels to the rest of the chassis.
- **Check the paint match between the tailgate and the quarter panel.** Don't look at the vehicle in the rain or in the night because both can hide a lot of blemishes.
- **Have the vehicle checked by a body shop and mechanic.** Ask for a complete mechanical report of the vehicle, what repairs you may have to do in the future and if the vehicle has been damaged.
- **Check under the car for damage.** If, for example the gas tank is damaged, or dented, it will give you an inaccurate reading on your fuel gauge and it is just another indication of problems.

Keep your eyes open, ask a lot of questions and if you have doubts, walk away.

## Questions and Answers

**How do I know whether I am buying a salvage vehicle that has been rebuilt?**

When a dealer comes into possession of a salvage or rebuilt-restored vehicle, the dealer, before he negotiates for the sale of the vehicle, must give written notice to the customer and the

prospective lien holder that a salvage certificate or a branded title has been issued for the vehicle (41-1a-1004). The dealer must also prominently display the form in the lower passenger-side corner of the windshield when the vehicle is displayed or offered for sale. This disclosure form must be used by non-dealers as well. However, non-dealers do not need to place the form in the windshield while the vehicle is on display or being offered for sale.

**Can a salvage or branded title that has been issued to a motor vehicle that has little or no damage ever have the salvage title brand removed?**

Yes, if the vehicle received major damage to only one major component part or major damage to one component part and damage to a second component part that takes less than 10 hours to repair, the vehicle may be eligible for an unbranded title. The vehicle will require a before-repair inspection by an authorized inspector from MVED, and may require an interim- and after-repair inspection.

**Can a salvage vehicle that has already been repaired have the brand removed from the title?**

No, if the vehicle has already been repaired or is a flood vehicle, it is not eligible to have the brand on the title removed.

**If a dealer buys a salvage vehicle from another state with a branded title, can the vehicle go through the inspection procedure in Utah and have the brand removed?**

No, if the title is already branded by another state or jurisdiction it is not eligible to have the brand removed in Utah.

**More questions?** Email: [dmv@utah.gov](mailto:dmv@utah.gov) , or direct telephone calls and correspondence regarding salvage vehicles to:

Motor Vehicle Information  
P.O. Box 30412  
Salt Lake City, UT 84130  
Phone: 801-297-7780

## Salvage Vehicles and Branded Titles

Last Updated April 04, 2012

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